

### Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are requested.

A number of minor editorial amendments have been made to the specification. It is submitted that no new matter has been added to the application by such amendments.

A replacement Figure 6 is submitted herewith to change the labeling of the motor "221" to "291." This amendment was made because the etching bath was also labeled as "221." It is submitted that no new matter has been added to the application by this amendment.

Claims 1 and 5-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Yamagata (US 5,951,833). Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Toyokura (JP 03-242919). Claim 8 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamagata in view of Sekine (US 5,660,744).

Claim 1 has been amended so as to further distinguish the present invention from the references relied upon in the rejections.

Further, claims 5, 8 and 9 have been amended to make a number of editorial revisions. These revisions have been made to place the claims in better U.S. form. None of these amendments have been made to narrow the scope of protection of the claims, nor to address issues related to patentability and therefore, these amendments should not be construed as limiting the scope of equivalents of the claimed features offered by the Doctrine of Equivalents.

In addition, claim 13 has been added.

The above-mentioned rejections are submitted to be inapplicable to the amended claims for the following reasons.

Claim 1 is patentable over Yamagata and Toyokura, since claim 1 recites a holding unit for holding a substrate, the holding unit including a holder plate, and a vacuum suction member adapted to be brought into contact with a peripheral portion of a surface of the substrate to suck the substrate, the vacuum suction member having no contact with regions of the substrate other than the peripheral portion, wherein the holder plate, the vacuum suction member and the substrate define a space which can be purged by blowing N<sub>2</sub> gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during precessing of the substrate. Neither Yamagata, nor Toyokura, discloses or suggests a holder

plate and a vacuum suction member that, with a substrate, define a space which can be purged by blowing N<sub>2</sub> gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during precessing of the substrate.

Yamagata discloses an anodizing apparatus including a holder 102 for holding a substrate 101. The holder 102 has a pair of concentric O-rings 104 recessed into a surface of the holder 102 facing the substrate 101. An opening penetrates the surface of the holder 102 facing the substrate 101 between the O-rings 104. The opening is connected to a pressure reducing line 105 that connects to a pump 111 for creating a vacuum between the substrate 101 and the holder 102 to hold the substrate 101 to the holder 102. (See column 10, line 54 - column 11, line 19 and Figure 1).

Based on the above discussion and the illustration in Figure 1, Yamagata does appear to disclose a slight space between the substrate 101 and the holder 102 as a result of the positioning of the O-rings 104. However, it is apparent that Yamagata fails to disclose or suggest that this space can be purged by blowing N<sub>2</sub> gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during precessing of the substrate, as is recited with regard to the space defined in claim 1. As a result, Yamagata fails to disclose or suggest the present invention as recited in claim 1.

Toyokura discloses a spin chuck 1 having a suction part 4 of two concentric circles located on a surface of the spin chuck 1 facing a wafer 2. A passage 5 penetrates the surface of the spin chuck 1 facing the wafer 2 between the two concentric circles of the suction part 4. The opening 5 is connected to a vacuum source and creates a vacuum between the wafer 2 and the spin chuck 1 to hold the wafer 2 to the spin chuck 1. (See Abstract and Figures 1 and 2).

Based on the above discussion and the illustration in Figure 2, Toyokura does appear to disclose a slight space between the wafer 2 and the spin chuck 1 as a result of the positioning of the suction part 4 in a manner similar to that discussed above regarding Yamagata. However, it is apparent that Toyokura also fails to disclose or suggest that this space can be purged by blowing N<sub>2</sub> gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during precessing of the substrate, as is recited with regard to the space defined in claim 1. As a result, Toyokura fails to disclose or suggest the present invention as recited in claim 1.

As for Sekine, it is relied on in the Office Action as disclosing an evaluation unit. However, Sekine fails to disclose or suggest a holder plate and a vacuum suction member, with a substrate, that

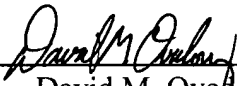
define a space which can be purged by blowing N<sub>2</sub> gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during precessing of the substrate.

Because of the above mentioned distinctions, it is believed clear that claims 1-13 are allowable over the references relied upon in the rejection. Furthermore, it is submitted that the distinctions are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention would not have been motivated to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in, or otherwise render obvious, the present invention as recited in claims 1-13. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 1-13 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that there are issues remaining which must be resolved before allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

Junji KUNISAWA et al.

By:   
David M. Ovedovitz  
Registration No. 45,336  
Attorney for Applicants

DMO/jmj  
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021  
Telephone (202) 721-8200  
Facsimile (202) 721-8250  
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